

The Enemy Is Working Stealthily to Replace Our Two Greatest Weapons

by Jeremy James



**"O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove
unto the multitude of the wicked"
- Psalm 74:19**

Few professing Christians seem to realize that they have an enemy who hates them.

This is probably the most important spiritual truth that a discernment ministry can highlight. A great many Christians today have forgotten this. They conveniently imagine that the world around them is spiritually neutral, but they are greatly mistaken. In reality, a vast supernatural army is working hard to establish complete control over the minds and hearts of men.

It should hardly be necessary to remind believers that we live in a state of perpetual war, and yet, despite all the warnings that are given in God's holy Word, many professing Christians still cling to the false idea that evil is simply the absence of good. This foolish notion belies the fact that most of mankind is in rebellion against the LORD God of Israel. They may claim that they believe in a God of some kind but the 'god' that they believe in is not the Father of Jesus of Nazareth. If he were then they would believe also in Jesus and acknowledge openly that he is the Son of God.

The Bible tells us that "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." This means that it is evil in sinew and substance. It is not caused by an absence of anything, but by the presence of something that resists the Holy Spirit and rails against God.

Satan is doing all he can to stir up enmity against the righteous, against those who love both the Father and the Son: **"The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth."** (Psalm 37:12)

In carrying out this great enterprise, he is not constrained by a shortage of willing accomplices: **"The earth is given into the hand of the wicked"** (Job 9:24).



Like any experienced military commander, he has assigned to his troops a wide variety of strategic tasks. These include espionage, counter-intelligence, disinformation and sabotage. It may seem fanciful to envisage his army of fallen angels working in this way – in concert with legions of corrupt men – but this is his *modus operandi*. He is a master of deception and works to a plan that seems to maximize the advantage he can extract from this perverse attribute.

When Jesus was warning of the many dangers facing true believers in the End Time, the one he mentioned most was the danger of deception.

Satan is working both to augment the strength of his own nefarious regiments and to undermine the operational effectiveness of the godly forces arrayed against him.

In this paper we will look mainly at the latter, in particular the steps he is taking to trick believers into neglecting their two greatest weapons – the Word of God and effectual, fervent prayer.

A Strong Man Armed

Christ warned us of the need to protect ourselves: **"When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace"** (Luke 11:21). Christians are almost embarrassed to think that they must arm themselves spiritually (and physically too, if necessary). He went on to say that evil spirits prowl this world looking for victims and when they find a home that has been left unguarded they summon their infernal kin and enter at their pleasure: **"Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."** Luke 11:26)

Satan has long sought to disarm the believer and establish control over his mental and emotional states. He is unable to "possess" the Spirit-filled believer, but he can achieve a great deal by simply disarming him. He has the ability to exercise the most extraordinary degree of deception if the individual is not vigilant. He cannot forcibly remove our two weapons, but he can induce us to set them aside, to neglect them, or to use ineffectual substitutes.

Our First Great Weapon: Prayer

We'll first look at prayer in the life of the believer and then we'll examine what the Enemy has done to neutralize it.

Prayer is the continual expression of our relationship with God. We speak with gratitude to our Father through prayer and bring before Him our needs and concerns, our joys and expectations, as well as our praise and celebration of His wonderful work, both in our own lives and in the lives of our family and fellow believers. Through prayer we glorify God.

Prayer is intrinsically personal, a sincere profession of our utter dependence upon God, our Father. It is a daily and hourly acknowledgment of His sovereign role in our lives, of the joy of our salvation, and of all that Christ, His Son, has achieved on our behalf. Through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we frame – in an attitude of repentance – the words that best express our thoughts and feelings and our desire to serve Him, to seek His holy will and to **"work out our salvation with fear and trembling."**

An insightful exploration of the role of prayer in our lives may be found in a recent article by T A McMahon of *The Berean Call* which we reproduce (with permission) in the attached **Annexe**. The author draws attention to several aspects of prayer that believers today would seem to underestimate, and addresses, in particular, its vital role in strengthening our fellow believers – an aspect of prayer that is often neglected.

False propositions

The Enemy has done a masterly job in distorting the true nature of prayer. Over the past hundred years or so, and even before that, he has induced the majority of professing Christians to believe many of the following propositions:

1. Vain repetition, which the Bible condemns, applies only to ritualized prayers.
2. God hears all prayers.
3. God has a plan for our lives which cannot be influenced by our prayers.
4. There is little real difference between personal and impersonal prayer.
5. Prayer is more 'successful' when infused with imagination.
6. Some forms of prayer are more 'advanced' or 'effective' than others.
7. Prayer is most effective when we empty our mind.

We will examine each of these in turn and see how they adversely affect our ability to pray as God intended.

Error #1 - Vain repetition applies only to ritualized prayers

Repeating the same words over and over again is not prayer. We would not address a dear friend in such a fashion. Rather we would trust him to hear us the first time and to be patient with us as we explained our concerns. But we wouldn't keep repeating the same thing over and over.

Having said that, Jesus referred to what today we call 'importunate' prayer. This is prayer where we are so deeply in need or sorely distressed that we repeatedly implore our Father to act swiftly on our behalf. Such an appeal is heartfelt, not vainly repetitive.

Jesus gave us the example of the 'importunate' widow who hassled the cold-hearted judge so much that he gave her the assistance she wanted. Jesus also gave the example of the man who came to his neighbor during the night, asking for bread to feed an unexpected caller. The neighbor was not inclined to get out of bed and help him, but he did so simply to be rid of him. In giving these examples, Jesus wanted us to understand that prayer must come from a true conviction of the righteousness of our request. If we truly believe that what we are asking is fully in accord with His holy will, we will persist. This expresses both our trust in God and our desire to do only what is pleasing to Him.

The error of repetitive prayer has been around almost from the foundation of the church. The Enemy lost no time inducing believers to pray the same way that pagans prayed, using invocations, incantations and constant repetition as a proxy for true prayer. During the uproar in the temple of Diana at Ephesus, as recorded in the Book of Acts, the huge crowd of heathen that had assembled stood chanting non-stop for two hours:

"...they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians... all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians." (Acts 19:28, 34)

This was a stark demonstration of the grip that repetitive prayer can exercise over the unregenerate mind. Two hours is a long time to spend repeating the same few words.

The early 'Christian' monks and ascetics, who spent years in the desert and remote monasteries, were avid practitioners of the same kind of prayer. Most of them knew nothing of true prayer, or they would not have wasted their lives in this way.



The church today is greatly hampered by repetitive prayer, by the endless recitation of verbal formulas. To this we can add the constant repetition of just a handful of verses from the treasury of Scripture, to the point where they have no real meaning. Even the prayer that Jesus gave during his sermon on the mount was intended only as a template, a pattern as to how we ought to pray.

One of the most stirring and heartfelt of all prayers was that of the thief on the cross: **"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."** In our prayers we must say only as much as we truly mean.

Error #2 - God hears all prayers

The modern, New Age maxim that 'God hears all prayers' is simply untrue. The Bible makes it quite clear that the only prayers He hears are those received through the intercession of His Son. This is why Christ is described as the mediator – the only mediator – between God and man. Man needs a Mediator because he is completely cut off from God. This is a horrifying consequence of the Fall. So when pagans claim to contact God 'in their own way', as it were, they are blind to the fact that this cannot be done. They are lost in the true sense of the term.

Our Father hears the prayers of born-again believers who love His Son. This is the entire foundation of prayer. However, Jesus said, **"If ye love me, keep my commandments."** (John 14:15) This implies that believers who are not truly obedient to God's Word, and who do not keep His commandments as they should, are failing to meet the most basic requirement set by God if He is to hear our prayers, namely that we love and obey His Son.

The 'free grace' doctrine that we hear so much about is actually quite misleading. The gifts of God were always by grace. There is nothing we can do to earn anything from God or to put Him in our debt, as it were. Even Israelites who made an offering under the Mosaic Law were recipients of His blessings through grace. Indeed, a born-again believer today is subject to a more exacting standard than that of an Israelite under the Mosaic Law. His outer conduct still matters, of course, but his heart must be perfect before God if he is to come before Him in prayer. That perfection comes only through the blood of Christ.

Satan has caused great confusion in the church by hiding the foundation on which prayer is possible. Our Father will hear us **ONLY** on the basis of what His Son achieved on our behalf. So, if we are to approach Him in prayer, we must demonstrate through obedience our love for His Son.

Unfortunately, communal prayer in many churches today is neither uplifting nor effectual, largely because it is conducted without any fear of God. Yes, the Apostle Paul invites us to come boldly before the throne of God, but we must do so with a broken spirit and a contrite heart (Psalm 51:17). We must never forget Whose throne we have come before!

Error #3 - God has a plan which cannot be influenced by our prayers

Believers sometimes wonder why it is necessary to bring our requests before God, given that He already knows both what we want and what we need. Many reasons have been suggested for this. For example, that we grow in faith when our prayers are answered. This is certainly true, but it's only part of a bigger picture.

Prayer is actually preparing us to live with God in eternity. It connects us, as created beings, with our Creator and allows the individual to draw closer to Him: **"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."** (James 4:8)

Prayer is drawing nigh to God. Very likely the closer we draw to God in this earthly life, the closer we will be to Him in eternity.

The more we trust in God, the closer to Him we want to be. But if we foolishly believe that God has an inflexible, predetermined 'plan' for our lives, then we will have great difficulty drawing closer to Him. He will seem distant or impersonal. This is why Satan has built so many religious and philosophical systems based on mechanics and causality. These have had a huge influence on man's conception of God, in particular the character of God. One even dominates the branch of Christianity known as Calvinism, which makes God the ultimate and efficient cause of everything and fails to see that love and free-will are fully compatible with His absolute sovereignty.



There are many scriptural 'solutions' to this seeming paradox, but perhaps the most striking may be found in Psalm 136. It has been rightly said that Scripture underlines the importance of a particular truth by repeating it. Well, in Psalm 136 the Word of God repeats a certain truth no fewer than twenty-six times! –

"...for his mercy endureth forever."

There is nothing like this anywhere else in Scripture. The LORD repeats this truth so many times in close succession because it is of truly monumental importance, a truth so great that we simply cannot understand God unless we understand this truth, namely that His mercy endures forever.

In the final analysis, we pray to God, not because we want something from Him, but because we want to be near Him, to know Him even more, and to draw ever closer to Him.

Error #4 – Despite appearances, all prayer is impersonal

From the discussion at 1-3 above, it should be clear that all true prayer is personal. It cannot be otherwise. The so-called great liturgies of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches may be soothing to the flesh, but they are not prayer.

The enemies of Christianity have long sought to portray prayer as a duty or obligation upon man, the performance of which is pleasing to God. But this is false. Prayer is not a duty but a privilege and a blessing for those who are born again.

The proposition that prayer is impersonal is closely related to the Pentecostal-Charismatic error known as praying to the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit always directs the believer toward Christ. Even though He is one of the three Persons in the Triune Godhead, He is not the one to whom we pray but the one who enables us to pray. Without the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, our prayers cannot be heard. Great confusion arises when the believer places more trust in the Holy Spirit than he does in the Father.



Never once did Jesus ask us to pray to the Holy Spirit, and never once did he pray to the Holy Spirit himself, not even in the Garden of Gethsemane or on Calvary. In fact there is not one example in the Bible of a righteous man addressing his prayers to the Holy Spirit.

The Roman Catholic church wants professing Christians to adopt the charismatic practice of praying to (or in) the Spirit. This is all part of its highly subversive ecumenical program. It even features in its official Catechism (1992):

2670... Since he teaches us to pray by recalling Christ, how could we not pray to the Spirit too? That is why the Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action.

2671... But the simplest and most direct prayer is also traditional, "Come, Holy Spirit," and every liturgical tradition has developed it in antiphons and hymns. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

To be born-again means to have a personal relationship with the LORD. We know Him and are known by Him. We have this relationship solely through His Son, and we exercise it solely through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Enemy tries all kinds of tricks to undermine that relationship and to shake our trust in what the Bible says about it.

Praying to (or in) the Holy Spirit is a disguised form of impersonal prayer. By engaging in it the individual is turning away from the Father, the very Person whom Jesus asked us to address.

There is a further problem. When professing Christians insist, contrary to Scripture, in addressing the Holy Spirit they risk making contact with a deceiving spirit. Some even try to command or invoke the Holy Spirit, just as the Catholic church recommends – "Come, Holy Spirit" – but this is a terrible error. The Holy Spirit cannot be summoned in this way. He is not a spiritual force but a Person. Once the individual slips into this mode of thinking, he begins to believe he is 'empowered' or 'anointed' in some way and that a measure of supernatural authority has been granted to him. Satan may even give him certain 'signs' to increase his self-delusion.

In practice there is not much to choose between repetitive prayer and impersonal prayer. Both deny our personal relationship with God and denigrate the character and sovereignty of God. They also turn our hearts from the singular truth that prayer is possible only because of Calvary. What Christ did for each one of us was personal, and our prayers, too, must be personal.

Error #5 - Prayer is more 'successful' when infused with imagination

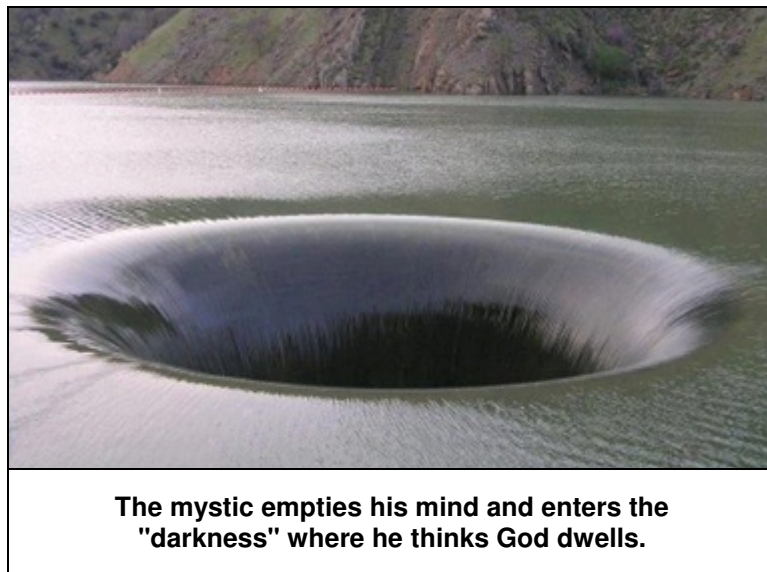
The first four errors lead to the fifth. This is how the Enemy works. The moment we start to think of prayer as an agent of change or a technique for improving our lives, we have moved into the realm of magic.

It is no coincidence that magic is based on such principles as the lengthy repetition of sacred syllables, the impersonal operation of esoteric laws, the eternal conflict between opposites (where good can never triumph over evil), and the receptivity of the Cosmic Force to the power of our imagination.

When man believes in magic and follows his heart, he is greatly deceived. The Word of God tells us that **"the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)**, but the Enemy tries to convince mankind that the opposite is true!

Belief in the power of imagination will likely play a major role in the formation of the coming One World Religion.

When a professing Christian starts using imagination in his prayers, he is about as far from true prayer as it is possible to be. He is now leaning on his own strength and using his imaginative faculty to shape and mould the outcome he wants. He expects the Cosmic Force to pour into the picture he has made in his imagination and manifest his desires.



This is actually an ancient occult technique, one of the many tricks that Satan has used to ensnare mankind.

The false teachers claim that it is the faith of practitioners, and not their use of imagination, that gets 'results', but this is just another way of saying that imagination has taken the place of faith. Any Christian who tries to 'name it and claim it' is practising magic.

The mystics of the Roman Catholic church made extensive use of imaginative techniques to induce mystical states or ecstatic experiences. The so-called *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuit Order, are a disturbing example of this.

Error #6 - Some forms of prayer are more 'advanced' than others

When we think of prayer as a technique for getting what we want from God, we are open to all kinds of errors. This leads to the false view that some forms of prayer are better or more effective than others. However, the plain truth is that Biblical prayer – the only prayer that God recognizes – is not a technique at all.

Unfortunately a large proportion of professing Christians seem to think it is.

The most visible expression of this error is the modern propensity, even among evangelicals, to practice some form of meditative or contemplative prayer. This is being used by the Roman Catholic church as a way of infiltrating Biblical Christianity. It is very troubling to think that Christians who claim to be born-again are reading works on meditative and contemplative prayer by Roman Catholic priests like Henri Nouwen, Thomas Merton, and Brennan Manning, or Catholic mystics like Teresa of Avila, Juliana of Norwich and Brother Lawrence.

Practitioners claim that the techniques and advice in these writings have improved their "prayer life" (a strange term). If prayer is a technique, then they might be right. But since prayer is not a technique these people are greatly deceived.

Some claim that they only want to enrich their "prayer life" and are not seeking anything from God, and yet they are definitely chasing after something. That 'something' is a mystical experience. They want to enter 'the Silence' reported by the mystics and have 'an encounter' with the Godhead. Satan exploits this carnal desire to get practitioners to go beyond word-based prayer and accept the dangerous occult doctrine that truth must be 'experienced.' They claim that this will only occur when we move beyond words and beyond language and discover for ourselves the ultimate ground of Being. The famous 14th century work on mysticism, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which makes a virtue of ignorance and darkness, has been very influential in the spread of this wicked philosophy.



"Trust me, little fellow, and enter the Silence!"

The Papal endorsement of mysticism has become more pronounced in recent years. The architects of the ecumenical movement have identified it as a key ingredient in the unification of all branches of nominal Christianity. It is significant, for example, that the following doctrinal statements may be found in the Catholic Catechism (paragraph numbers are in brackets):

Meditation is above all a quest...The required attentiveness is difficult to sustain. We are usually helped by...holy icons...^[2705] There are as many and varied methods of meditation as there are spiritual masters. ^[2707] Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire...Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in *lectio divina* or the rosary. ^[2708] Entering into contemplative prayer is like entering into the Eucharistic liturgy... ^[2711]

None of this is Biblical, but is grounded rather in the Catholic monastic tradition, with its so-called spiritual masters, holy icons, imagination, emotion, desire, attentiveness, *lectio divina*, rosaries, and eucharistic liturgy. It is portrayed as a skill that one must acquire through practice and perseverance under the direction of a 'spiritual master'. Indeed, the proposition that "meditation is above all a quest" is a central tenet of Eastern philosophy.

Clearly, Satan is using mysticism to destroy true Christian prayer.

Error #7 - Prayer is most effective when we empty our mind

This error is fraught with peril. The modern emphasis on *mindfulness*, which the Catholic Catechism calls *attentiveness*, is part of this error. Not only does it treat prayer as a technique, but it places special emphasis on mental states, where higher forms of meditation are supposed to be achievable by practitioners who have learned to foster the right mental disposition. These may or may not involve the practitioner 'emptying' his mind, which involves suspending his faculty of discrimination and passively accepting whatever images appear on the screen of his mind.

Sometimes practitioners are required to 'empty' their mind in order to fill it again with selected images and ideas, a process called 'visualization'. There is no need to examine the mechanics of all of this since every 'spiritual master' has his own *modus operandi* and mystical refinements. The bottom line in all cases is that these so-called ancient techniques are bogus substitutes for prayer. When taken to the stage where visualization takes over from reality, they can do real spiritual harm.

Pastor David Cloud put it like this:

"Contemplative practices, such as the Jesus Prayer, breath prayers, visualizing prayer, centering prayer, and *lectio divina* are exceedingly dangerous. They are vehicles to bring practitioners into contact with demons. Many who practice these things end up believing in a pagan concept of God such as pantheism (God is everything) and panentheism (God is in everything). Through these practices people typically become increasingly ecumenical and interfaith in thinking." – *Friday Church News Notes*, Volume 17, Issue 1, January 1, 2016

The great 'spiritual masters' of Catholic mysticism rarely alert their students to the dangers involved in meditation and contemplation. As the pastor says, they "are vehicles to bring practitioners into contact with demons." Under the guise of prayer, naive Christians are being tricked into opening themselves to a harmful supernatural influence.



We can see two great victories for Satan in all of this. Firstly, practitioners lose the guidance and protection that is found only in true Christian prayer. This loss is not episodic but may persist for months or even years. Secondly, they engage in forms of mental experimentation that can leave them wide open to demonic deception. We are not speaking here of possession or something of that nature, but straightforward deception, to which all are subject who indulge in this foolish and unscriptural practice.

Many contemplatives go through long periods of despair, the natural result of a practice that renders them unable to pray as God directed. They try to explain this as a necessary step in their 'spiritual growth', and have invented terms like *dark night of soul*, *accidie*, and *aridity* to excuse their miserable condition. But the awful truth is that they have cut themselves off from God and have sought solace instead in emptiness and darkness.

It is easy for Satan to draw them further into this desperate state of isolation by throwing them a supernatural 'experience' from time to time, perhaps a vision or a mystical message. Filled with excitement and false hope, they soldier on, oblivious to the fact that they have been cruelly deceived.

The architects of this terrible deception like to present the life of Teresa of Avila, the Spanish mystic, as a sterling example of the fruit that may be found through the contemplative path. But they seldom if ever mention that the Spanish nun referred time and again in her writings to the damage wrought by this unscriptural practice in the lives of many women whom she knew personally. Like the rest of the Catholic mystics, Teresa of Avila was ignorant of the harm she was doing by promoting a system of 'prayer' that was little more than self-hypnosis, imagination and mind control. The same ignorance – and arrogant disregard for the Bible – is also evident in the writings of Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk who described himself as a kind of western Buddhist. (Compare this with the rebellious statements endorsed by Pope Francis, a Jesuit and great admirer of Merton's writings: "I have confidence in Buddha. I believe in God, Allah." [January 2016].)



**A statue of the Buddha is reverently held aloft
in the Pope's inter-faith video, January 2016**

True Christian prayer is a deadly weapon and Satan hates it. He knows that even the lowliest believer can do real harm to his cause through genuine Christian prayer. A sickly and bedridden woman, greatly weakened by advanced age, can, through contrite and heartfelt prayer, do much to impede the works of darkness. She does not need 'techniques' or 'attentiveness' or 'centering prayer' or any of that garbage. She simply comes before God with her petition in the name of Jesus. She does not empty her mind but, rather, fills it with God's Word. And she does not rely for a moment on what little strength she has but, like a little child, depends entirely on the Almighty to fulfill her request.

Our Second Wonderful Weapon: The Bible

Our other weapon, of course, is the Word of God. It is so powerful that the LORD calls it a sword!

A true believer feeds daily on God's holy Word, finding in its wonderful text all that he needs to nourish his soul. In a short paper like this we cannot possibly do justice to all that the Bible means to those who are saved.

The Bible does not simply *contain* the Word of God – it **IS** the Word of God. And this is why Satan hates it.

The Reformation transformed Europe, and we rightly give credit to its leaders, to men like Luther and Calvin, for revealing afresh many of the fundamental truths of Christianity. But the real power of the Reformation lay, not in men, but in the Word of God. The Bible could now be read and studied by people from all walks of life. The ruthless control exercised by Rome had been broken and God's holy Word was now widely available.



A statue of the Buddha and a Muslim rosary are displayed in ecumenical solidarity in the Pope's inter-faith video, January 2016.

Satan and his servants had been careless. They had underestimated the revolutionary potential of the printing press. Within a few short years tens of thousands of copies of the Bible had been printed and quietly distributed to all parts of Europe. The real power of the Reformation lay in this devastating proclamation of God's Word. As men read it for themselves and felt the stirring of the Holy Spirit within their breasts, they burst forth into a whole new expression of truth and spirituality.

Ever since that time Satan and his army of wicked human servants have been working hard to reverse this calamity. One of the purposes of the 'revolution' in science which took place shortly thereafter, under the supervision of the occult elite who control Europe, was to convince men that reason and the Bible were in conflict. Since the Bible was now in the public domain, as it were, and could not easily be suppressed, the only course of action was to convince men, through Rationalism and the so-called 'Enlightenment', that the Bible was a product solely of human experience. They tried to 'explain' the miracles and wonders described in the Bible and to dismiss it as a compendium of historical narratives (much of which could not be trusted), poetry, philosophy, dynastic chronicles, sacrificial rituals, and religious concepts common to many ancient cultures. And when they got to Jesus they admirably described him as a perfect example of a righteous man, of impeccable character and moral standing, a man whom all could emulate – but just a man, not God.

This attack still continues today. The Enemy is using every possible lie to undermine the Bible. Extensive pseudo scholarship has been used to question the accuracy and reliability of the original Biblical texts, the historical reality of the people and places mentioned in the Bible, the canonicity of books included in (or excluded from) the Bible, the Biblical timeframe, the literary styles used, the scientific accuracy of many facts given in the Bible, and much much more. These studies have been funded by institutions whose primary aim is to discredit the Bible and promote a pantheistic or Masonic worldview. Many brilliant minds have been recruited for this purpose, scholars and theologians who often do not even bother to hide their hostility to Biblical truth.



**"Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth forever."
- Psalm 119:160**

There is no lie that Satan will not tell to attack and discredit the Bible. The sheer multiplicity of lies is, in itself, a great challenge for believers since no-one can possibly take the time study and refute all of them. For example, the Enemy can afford to employ dozens of highly educated men for decades to construct a lie whose only purpose is to contest the archaeological evidence that proves the existence of just one or two Biblical towns or villages.

Satan has constructed an elaborate model of the 'universe' to challenge the Bible. In it a tiny spherical earth is whizzing through an infinitely vast cosmos, populated with accidental life forms that just happened to evolve out of nothing. This lie is so outrageous, so patently absurd, that anyone with a functioning brain should be able to see it for what it is – unless, of course, it is presented as 'science'. This is why men can believe they are standing on a ball that is whizzing through space at 18 miles a second, and that every year this tiny ball travels a distance of 580 million miles around another ball. Since mankind has been trained to believe the pronouncements of 'science' even when they conflict outrageously with common sense, the 'bullet earth' theory and equally foolish nonsense is widely accepted as true.

The Enemy is also making it harder and harder for men to read the Bible. He has produced so many translations in English alone that the true meaning in most cases has been cleverly mutilated. Most translation teams today include members who are not born-again and therefore cannot interpret correctly what the Bible is saying: **"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."** (1 Corinthians 2:14)

When was the last time you picked up a Bible that was translated in its entirety by a highly qualified team of born-again Christians? The only one I know is the King James Bible of 1611.

In addition, nearly all modern translations use a manuscript source other than the *Textus Receptus* or 'received text'. The *Textus Receptus* is based on over five thousand manuscript sources, scrupulously cross-checked against one another for verification purposes, while modern translations rely heavily on just two manuscripts, the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus, both of which are known to have serious defects.

So what is going on? Are we being deceived? Of course we are! The Enemy is systematically degrading the Bible. This process began in earnest in the second half of the 19th century, mainly in England and Germany, and has been gathering pace ever since. As a result, we now have pastors and preachers in Christian communities around the world who quote copiously from a manmade paraphrase of the Bible, known as *The Message*, and treat it as though it was the Word of God.



Building the One World Religion

In order to form his One World religion, Satan must greatly reduce the number of born-again Christians who can faithfully use the two deadly weapons that God has given them. So he must continue to attack the Bible and true Biblical prayer by every means possible. Since they can't be wrenched from our hands, he must trick believers into replacing them with ineffectual substitutes, namely false modes of prayer and poor quality Bible translations.

The following is just a sample of the many tricks he has been using to achieve this:

1. He has convinced a large part of the church that the New Testament superseded the Old Testament and that there is no need to study the latter.

2. He has assigned a god of love to the New Testament and a god of anger to the Old, a perverse trick that distorts the gospel and mocks the Word of God.
3. He has convinced many that the Bible only 'speaks' to us when we use techniques like contemplation and *lectio divina*.
4. He has undermined the literal truth of God's Word and replaced it with allegories, metaphors, symbols, and much else besides. ('Surely you don't believe Jonah was swallowed by an actual whale, do you? That's just a metaphor to convey a profound truth to simple people.')
5. He has made a distinction between truths that are essential and those that are optional. This enables him to discard, trivialize or neglect large parts of God's Word.
6. He has contextualized the Bible so that its meaning necessarily varies with the culture and ethnicity of its readers. What is right in one culture is wrong in another. ('The Jews condemned cross-dressing but that was purely cultural. It doesn't apply to us today.')
7. The Bible is out of date, with its dietary rules and animal sacrifices. The world has moved on since Biblical times and we need modern prophets to make it more relevant and bring fresh revelation.
8. Knowledge is good but it should never be allowed to repress our feelings and experiences. Truth should not be locked in a box...or a book. A spiritual person must live in the spirit and hear the voice of God as it speaks to us today. [How many heresies have been spawned by this lie!]
9. Worship is more important than Bible study in daily life. The church must concentrate on worship and use it to open our hearts to God's love. [The destruction of Christian worship through the use of secular music is such a serious topic that we will address it in a separate paper in 2016, God willing.]
10. The Bible is all about love and the need for tolerance. Christians should set aside their differences and focus only on what they have in common. Jesus was not a fundamentalist and would have condemned the 'Bible truthers' of today. [How sweet this sounds to the ears of Rome!]

We could go on, but it is hardly necessary. Once the individual stops believing in the sufficiency, authority and completeness of God's Word, he is sure to be led astray. Satan has a lie for everyone. We don't avoid his lies by getting to know them, but by immersing ourselves daily in God's Word and using it as our only guide and compass in life.

Contemporary ignorance of God's Word

Let's consider just one example of the mayhem that can result from a sloppy or non-existent grasp of God's Word. When the so-called Kansas City 'prophets' began to gather a following they used the term 'Joel's Army' as their banner slogan. Apparently they saw themselves as great spiritual warriors, just like the army – "my great army" – mentioned in Joel 2:25, fighting the forces of darkness and conquering the world for Jesus. Presumably the many thousands who listened to these false prophets were pleased to be described in this way. But pause for a moment and look at Joel 2:25 –

**"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the
cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm,
my great army which I sent among you."**

The term "my great army" actually refers to a swarm of devouring locusts, a term which throughout the Bible denotes the severity of God's judgment on a rebellious people:

The locusts, small as they are, are in God's hands "a great army" [**Barnes**]; armies of insects [**Poole**]; locusts...the army of God [**Gill**]; The locusts and caterpillars are here called God's great army [**Matthew Henry**]

The word "army" also appears in two other verses (2:11 and 2:20), and in each instance it means either a multitude of devouring insects or an army of pagan invaders.

Joel 2:25 is not a difficult verse to interpret. It virtually explains itself. Its context in chapter 2 makes it even plainer. There is no possibility that it could mean a great army of saints commissioned by God to transform the world! But the so-called Kansas City prophets didn't know this. To their shame not one among their swollen ranks could see that their banner slogan was simply ridiculous.

Conclusion

The Enemy has done everything he can to convince professing Christians that the old hymns and the King James Bible are boring and out of date, with little or no relevance to our modern lives. He has also convinced many that traditional Christian prayer is inferior to the 'contemplative prayer' practised by the mystics. The sad reality is that the old hymns, the King James Bible and traditional Christian prayer are all that stand between true Biblical Christianity and the phony 'love is all and all is love' ecumenical Christianity being developed by Rome.

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3)

Jeremy James

Ireland

January 20, 2016

For more information visit www.zephaniah.eu

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Do We Have a Prayer?

by T A McMahon



Do we have a prayer? There are a lot of ways we can consider that question. As examples, we've probably all heard someone say, "You don't have a prayer" when the odds of what is hoped for are overwhelmingly against it. There are last-resort appeals, sometimes referred to as "foxhole prayers," in which a soldier cries out to God to save him from the enemy overrunning his position. There are "a deal with the devil" invocations. Some prayers also take on the form of incantations that supposedly can manipulate the powers of the universe by being spoken.

Within Christendom, prayer too often has become an attempt to manipulate God. Positive confession, which is basically commanding God to act, is a favored technique among growing numbers of Christians. Throughout the years, articles and books by *The Berean Call* have dealt with the many abuses of prayer. Our objective in this article is to focus on *biblical prayer* – primarily, what does the Bible say about it, and *are we* as believers *conforming* to its teachings?

From our beginning here at *The Berean Call*, prayer has never been theoretical or theologically academic. In fact, we never begin our workday without first spending time together, as a staff, in prayer. Our Thursday morning staff meetings are dedicated to intercessory prayer for others who call, write, or email us with their prayer requests. We wanted to establish that right up front in this article because, as we look at what the Scriptures declare about prayer, we'll be referring back to our prayer time as a testimony to the truth of God's Word.

**"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."
– 1 Peter 3:12**

Prayer is a believer's *personal* communication with God

First and foremost, prayer is a believer's *personal* communication with God: **"In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"** (Philippians 4:6). In nearly all religions and belief systems, prayer is usually memorized and ritualistic, lacking any personal interactive qualities. Biblical Christianity is the exception because a true Christian, one who is born again by the Spirit of God, begins his or her life in Christ in a very personal way: with a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus.



'Evening Prayer'

(print at Boston Public Library)

Rote, mechanical, or ritualistic prayer impersonalizes what should be very personal communication between the believer and the Lord. Yet one of the latest trends within Christendom that claims to promote the personal and experiential practice of contemplative prayer teaches repetitive praying (*Lectio Divina*), e.g., saying a word or phrase over and over again, sometimes hundreds of times. That is not only impersonal but it's *nonsensical* communication. In spite of that, an influential evangelical leader within the Emerging Church Movement claims that he prays to Jesus each morning by repeating His name hundreds of times. More importantly, this practice is unbiblical: **"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them"** (Matthew 6:7-8). All the teachings on prayer throughout the Scriptures clearly reveal its *personal* aspects.

Although the popular question, "What would Jesus do?" seems to have morphed into somewhat of a marketing scheme (e.g., the bracelet and ball cap emblem "WWJD?"), it could motivate us to check out what Jesus actually *did*. Prayer is definitely something He did, and He did it continually. The Son was ever in communication with the Father. In spite of the fact that He was daily being sought by the crowds, He nevertheless made time to get away to pray: **"And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone"** (Matthew 14:23). If that was important to the perfect, sinless God/Man, it should speak volumes to our own less-than-perfect hearts that are vulnerable to sin and terribly needy. *We* need to do it.

Scripture tells us further that He **"continued all night in prayer"** (Luke 6:12) and that He referred to the Temple as **"the house of prayer"** (Luke 19:46). Our Lord prayed for Peter that he might be protected from Satan: **"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not..."** (Luke 22:31-32). He told His disciples to **"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation"** (Matthew 26:41), to love their enemies and to **"pray for them which despitefully use you"** (Luke 6:27-28). Jesus gave His disciples a pattern for prayer (Luke 11:1-4), and for believers and new believers He declared: **"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word"** (John 17:20).



'Prayer of Moses' by Ivan Kramskoi

Jesus continues to pray for us

Sometimes we forget (if we once knew) that Jesus not only exhorts us to pray, but He has prayed for us, and He *continues to pray for us*. He prays for our protection and effectiveness in the world: **"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil"** (John 17:15). **"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he [Jesus] ever liveth to make intercession for them"** (Hebrews 7:25). **"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us"** (Romans 8:34).

Having Jesus pray to the Father for us is as good as it gets regarding intercessory prayer. I certainly don't know how that works, but I do know that it was important enough for the Holy Spirit to tell us this through God's Word. Furthermore, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit we are given instructions regarding *how we are* to function in prayer. The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that prayer is not an incidental issue for a believer in Christ.

Prayer "without ceasing"

Prayer is more often than not accompanied by the words **"without ceasing"** or similar expressions. The Apostle Paul, who used those terms more than any New Testament writer, presented his own life as a pattern and example of how believers should live their lives in Christ (Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:10), and his emphasis on prayer underscores all that he did. To the Ephesians he wrote that **"[I] cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers"** (1:16). To the Colossians he wrote, **"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you"** (1:3) and **"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"** (1:9). And to the Thessalonians he said that **"Night and day [he was] praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith"** (1 Thessalonians 3:10).



[Painting by Nicolaes Maes c.1656]

There is no secret to prayer

Paul wrote that, **"Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do"** (Philippians 4:9). He was such an outstanding believer that we may lose sight of the fact that he was no different from those of us who are believers. He was a sinner saved by grace, as all believers are. His life was lived by God's grace, which is available to every believer. So what was his "secret" for spiritual success? No secret at all: Prayer!

**"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
– James 5:16**

Asking others to pray for us

He not only prayed continually for others, he continually asked others to pray for him:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me *in your prayers to God for me*; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints" (Romans 15:30-31).

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And *for me*, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6:18-20).

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal *praying also for us*, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds" (Colossians 4:2-3).

Paul had no problem with asking others to pray for him, but believers are sometimes reluctant to ask. The primary excuse, especially as it's related to family members, is "I don't want to worry them." Although there are exceptions, too often it is a "lame excuse" or worse. By our own self-consciousness, we deprive others of the opportunity to petition the Lord for His grace and mercy on our behalf. Moreover, it eliminates the opportunity for our fellow believers to see God's intervention, and without a knowledge of one's situation that needs prayer, the encouragement that could come from a praise report may be lost.

There are other excuses for not asking for prayer, yet they nearly always involve some form of pride, some form of what others may be thinking about us. Even, "it's too small a deal to bring before God or to ask others to do so," which translates "I can handle this myself." Seriously? When "self" enters the picture nothing good can come of it.

Faith in ourselves or faith in God?

Those of the "God helps those who help themselves" groups (Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac* gospel and the Positive Confession confessors' mantra) tell us that deferring to God's will is a "cop-out" that undermines our "faith" in ourselves. Aside from the fact that our faith in ourselves *needs* to be "undermined," what biblical Christian would ever think that God's will – what He desires for us – would not be the absolute best that we could conform to and receive?

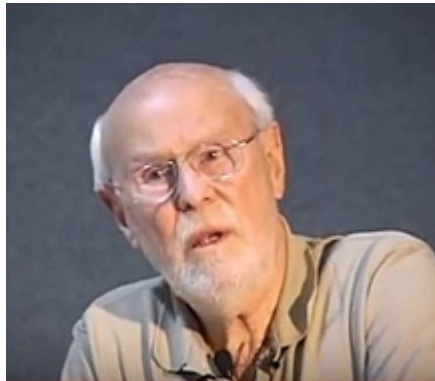
Jesus certainly encouraged that by asking, **"Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"** (Matthew 7:9-11). Didn't Jesus, at perhaps the most difficult point in His life, pray to God the Father, saying, **"Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless *not my will, but thine, be done*?"** (Luke 22:42). Was that a "cop-out?"

Prayer is sort of a mystery in the sense that God knows what we need before we ask, and He knew what we would ask for. Some would question, "Why then pray to God if He knows all that?" Well, He knows; we don't. How would we know if God were intervening in our lives if we had no prayerful communication with Him? If there are no requests, then there can be no confidence that God is doing things for us.

The need for obedience

Another aspect of prayer is what may involve our prayers *never reaching* the throne of God. Hebrews 4:16 exhorts us to **"come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."** What blocks our prayers? **"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts";** **"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; *that your prayers be not hindered*"** (James 4:2-3; 1 Peter 3:7). Walking in disobedience to the instructions given in God's Word stops any request cold: **"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil"** (1 Peter 3:12).

Dave Hunt, my best friend in the Lord (who is now with the Lord), had a wonderful sense of humor, and it was often self-deprecating. He would say (tongue-in-cheek), "People avoid my speaking engagements by the thousands." Congregations would laugh, knowing that was hardly the case for their gifted speaker. But here is something that is not laughable: Christians avoid *prayer meetings* by the thousands...and more. Not convinced? Have your church schedule a weekly prayer meeting and do a head count after the second or third week. Although we praise the Lord for the exceptions, the initial enthusiasm (which may be an overstatement) goes away in a short time.



**Dave Hunt, co-founder of *The Berean Call*
and author of several fine books on
Christian discernment.**

The most grievous part of such a development is what those who avoid prayer meetings and those who bail out on them are *missing*. As just one example, we refer back to *The Berean Call's* daily staff prayer time. First of all, we all know one another, love each other, and care about what is going on in each one's life. Therefore we pray five days a week or more for each other's needs and requests. That continuity enables us to hear many of the details of how God has answered our prayers, which is a tremendous encouragement and confidence builder in our Lord as He confirms the teachings of His Word. That's an abundance of prayer requests and praise reports. It also reinforces the fellowship we are to have as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Seeking His help in all that we do

Prayer is neither a suggestion nor a "pray when you feel like it" option for biblical Christians. In his first letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul tells him to urge the believers in Ephesus to pray for others: **"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men"** (1 Timothy 2:1). Everything a believer does – in the sense of **"whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"**; **"whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus"**; **"and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men"** (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17, 23) – needs to start with prayer and be sustained by prayer. Again, our prayer must be a continual, personal communication with the Lord seeking His help in all that we do.

Do we have a prayer? Absolutely. And it's our *prayer* that prayer will be our primary modus operandi – our continual way of going about what we do – for the year ahead, all for the glory of God and that His grace and mercy will be abundantly manifest in our lives.

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